

STATEMENT OF SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN
CHAIRMAN, SENATE COMMITTEE ON
COMMERCE, SCIENCE AND TRANSPORTATION
HEARING ON KATHLEEN ABERNATHY, MICHAEL COPPS, AND KEVIN MARTIN
TO BE COMMISSIONERS OF THE FCC

MAY 17, 2001

We continue with the second panel of today's hearing to examine the qualifications of three individuals nominated by the President to serve as members of the Federal Communications Commission.

We welcome this morning FCC nominees Kathleen Abernathy, Michael Copps, and Kevin Martin, their family members and guests. Together with Michael Powell, who will continue as Chairman of the Commission, these individuals, if confirmed, will guide American telecommunications policy into the digital age.

I congratulate the nominees on the talent and dedication that has brought them the recognition they enjoy today, and I appreciate their willingness to undertake the tremendous responsibilities of serving as an FCC Commissioner. They are outstanding individuals with diverse individual talents and deep collective expertise in telecommunications.

These talents and expertise will prove particularly important as the FCC continues to confront the tremendous challenges that face us in the digital age, and to address the issues raised by the rapid changes taking place in the telecommunications industry.

Ms. Abernathy has an extensive background and experience in telecommunications both at the FCC, where she served as legal advisor to two FCC commissioners and served in the Office of the General Counsel. Recently, Mr. Copps served as the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Trade Development. Mr. Martin was also a staff member at the FCC, serving as Legal Advisor to Commissioner Harold Furchtgott-Roth. Each one of these individuals brings to the Commission years of experience and knowledge of the issues. I commend each of them for their commitment to serve their country. I would also ask of them that they dedicate their efforts to implementing sound public policy, that serves the interest of consumers, during this era of convergence in the telecommunications industries.

I can also appreciate the pride their families must feel today, and I thank them for their support because it will be so important to the nominees' performance of their official duties.

I take this Committee's advice and consent role very seriously, and it is our responsibility to ensure that prospective members of the FCC fully understand their duties and are capable and committed to fulfilling the mission requested of them. However, while we must be thorough, we must also be careful. Just as it is not appropriate for nominees to the bench be asked how they will vote on a specific issue that is currently before, or likely to come before, their court; it is not appropriate for commissioners who have quasi-judicial responsibilities to pre-judge cases they must consider. I hope and trust that we will all respect those boundaries, in deference to the process and in fairness to those who have the right to a fair and impartial hearing before the commission.

With that, I would like to yield to Senator Hollings, who will introduce Mr. Copps, followed Senator Stevens, who will introduce Ms. Abernathy, and finally Senator Edwards, who will introduce Mr. Martin.